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# THE CORNELIA SORABJI SCHOLARSHIP IN LAW AT SOMERVILLE COLLEGE

*University of Oxford*

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*Proposal by Somerville College and the Faculty of Law,  
University of Oxford*



The Bodleian Law Library in the St Cross Building; PA Photocall; the Law Faculty's St Cross Building

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## INTRODUCTION

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The Faculty of Law and Somerville College are proud to celebrate Cornelia Sorabji and her achievements through the creation of the Cornelia Sorabji Scholarship in Law for outstanding Indian graduate students.

Somerville College's links with India date back to 1889, with the arrival of Cornelia Sorabji, who was not merely Somerville's first Indian student, but the first Indian woman to study at any British University. Somerville's founding Principal, Madeleine Shaw Lefevre, was among those active in raising funds to enable her to come to England. Upon her return to India, Cornelia Sorabji became the first woman to practice law in India and worked on behalf of women living in purdah. Cornelia Sorabji's nephew, Professor Sir Richard Sorabji, says: *"Cornelia described her happiness studying in Somerville from 1889 in copious letters back home to Pune and would have been proud to endorse the call for a scholarship in memory of the legal work she initiated"*.

The study of law has been an integral part of the University of Oxford throughout its 800 year history. Building on this tradition, the Faculty of Law at Oxford is today recognised as one of the best in the world.

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## LAW IN OXFORD

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The Faculty of Law in the University of Oxford is one of the largest in the United Kingdom. The Faculty consists of over one hundred and fifty academics and the diverse and outstanding students are drawn from all over the world.

### **Oxford is different from any other law school:**

- Students for the BA in Jurisprudence are typically taught in pair tutorials. A tutorial is an exercise for which the student writes an essay, so that the focus of the meeting is on the student's own work on the subject.
- We have the only graduate degrees in the world that are taught in tutorials as well as in classes (the Bachelor of Civil Law (BCL), Master's in Jurisprudence (MJur), and the new Master's in Law and Finance).
- We have the largest doctoral programme in Law in the English-speaking world.

### **Law in Oxford has an international outlook:**

- Around half of the Faculty have studied in other countries.
- Undergraduate students are 85% British and 15% overseas.
- The proportions are roughly the reverse among graduate students.

Oxford has become a worldwide centre for legal studies, as the English legal profession has taken the lead in the worldwide legal services industry. The University has trained many of the lawyers who have become partners in global firms. We are an English law school for the whole world.



Cornelia Sorabji at Somerville College, 1889 (Credit: Somerville College, University of Oxford)





*'What chiefly struck some of us who have returned from overseas after many years was the wise way in which Somerville has been 'extended' – the best use made of all available space, every opportunity exhausted to its highest possibility - not merely in bricks and mortar and things material, but in spirit and intention and 'atmosphere'.*

From Cornelia Sorabji's account of the Gaudy (reunion) she attended at Somerville in 1923.

*Portrait given to Somerville College by Cornelia Sorabji in 1912 (Credit: Somerville College, University of Oxford)*

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## THE CORNELIA SORABJI SCHOLARSHIP IN LAW

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At graduate level, there are currently 33 law students from India. However, each year, a significant number of Indian students who meet the high standards for entry to Oxford to study law do not take up their places because of a lack of funds.

Oxford attracts the very best graduate students from all over the world for its taught and research graduate law degrees: a first-class undergraduate degree in law is required and competition for places is tough. Oxford law graduates go on to pursue influential careers around the world. They take their knowledge of English law and legal institutions home and use it to the benefit of their own countries. Many go on to become the leading practitioners and academics of their generation. We are keen to ensure that Oxford recruits the very best students for our graduate degree programmes, regardless of their financial position; but we continue to lose outstanding applicants who are offered places, but are unable to take them up without financial assistance.

The University of Oxford is committed to increasing the number of Indian students across the board, including by offering more fully-funded scholarships. For example, as a result of a generous grant of £3 million from the Ministry of Human Resource Development in India, matched by Somerville College and the University of Oxford, five permanently endowed scholarships for Indian graduate students have been established at the Oxford India Centre for Sustainable Development, based at Somerville College. Six students have benefitted from the scholarships since they started in 2013.

The creation of the Cornelia Sorabji Scholarship in Law will be a significant milestone in extending the opportunities available for the best and brightest Indian graduate students to study law at Oxford.

To be successful, the applicant will be expected to demonstrate not only exceptional academic merit, but also a commitment ultimately to return to India to put their skills and experience into practice.

The holder of this scholarship will belong to the Faculty of Law and the Oxford India Centre for Sustainable Development at Somerville College. He or she will play an active part in a vibrant community of scholars and fellows. Scholars have access to world experts and the unparalleled opportunities that Oxford offers. They form friendships and networks that last a lifetime.

The annual cost of full sponsorship a Cornelia Sorabji Law Scholar is **£36,500**. The cost of permanently endowing the Cornelia Sorabji Scholarship in Law is **£1.2 million**.

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# RECOGNITION OF BENEFACTORS

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By endowing the Cornelia Sorabji Scholarship in Law, a benefactor will leave a permanent and visible legacy at Oxford. Successive generations of Indian graduate law scholars will benefit from this outstanding generosity.

Somerville College and the University of Oxford are proud to recognise the generosity of donors and we have established ways of honouring major benefactors.

**Naming opportunities** for scholarships can be offered: a major donor may wish to add his or her name to the Cornelia Sorabji Law Scholarship. This will provide permanent recognition of the benefactor's generosity for successive generations of students.

**Foundation Fellowships** are awarded for outstanding service to Somerville College, at the discretion of the Governing Body. Somerville currently has four Foundation Fellows.

**The Vice-Chancellor's Circle** recognises individuals, foundations and corporate benefactors who have provided generous support to the collegiate University. Members receive regular communications from the Vice-Chancellor and senior officers, and are invited to an annual members' event in the spring.

The Chancellor may invite the University's most significant supporters to become members of the prestigious **Chancellor's Court of Benefactors**. The Court meets each autumn in Oxford and offers benefactors the chance to engage with the Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor and other senior leaders within the collegiate University. These meetings also allow benefactors to meet other members of the Court and to gain a greater understanding of the life and work of the University and the colleges.

**The Chancellor's Court of Benefactors Fellowship** is awarded to honour those members of the Court who have given exceptional support to the University of Oxford. Members of this distinguished group are known as CCB Fellows.

Members of the Chancellor's Court of Benefactors may have their generosity honoured by having their name engraved on the **Clarendon Arch**, near the entrance of the historic Bodleian Library.

The highest honour the University can bestow is the **Sheldon Medal**, which is reserved for an individual benefactor who has made a strategic difference to the life of the University. The medal was first awarded in 2002 and is named after Gilbert Sheldon, one of Oxford's early benefactors, who graduated in 1620.



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## FOR FURTHER DETAILS PLEASE CONTACT:

**Sara Kalim**  
**Director of Development**

Somerville College  
University of Oxford  
Oxford OX2 6HD

Telephone: +44 (0)1865 280596

Email: Sara.Kalim@some.ox.ac.uk

**Maureen O'Neill**  
**Director of Development**

Faculty of Law  
St Cross Building, St Cross Road  
Oxford OX1 3UL

Telephone: +44 (0)1865 281198

Email: Maureen.ONeill@law.ox.ac.uk

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